

# Letter from Taizé

May - June 1984

ISSN 0750-3695 Bimonthly 3,00FF — £ 0.45 (UK) — \$ 0.90 (US)

See the joy coming from God  
Towards a life-commitment  
Meditating on the Word  
A pilgrimage in an African slum  
News

## Contemplating the Face of Christ

The risen Christ, who lives in the radiance of God, is at the same time in anguish, today, tomorrow and until the end of the world. To understand Jesus' death on the cross it is necessary first of all to grasp that he is risen, and that at every moment he comes to meet us just as we are. He takes upon himself all that hurts us, in ourselves and in others. He stays beside those who are forced to undergo a kind of little death through the effects of contempt and the violence of hate. Even more, the apostle Peter, to whom Christ entrusted the Church, affirms that the risen Lord visits even the non-believers who have died without having been able to know his name (1 Peter 3. 19-20).

On the cross Jesus believes himself abandoned: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Seeing those who are torturing him, he prays: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing". and from that day, for each one of us, the contemplation of his forgiveness gives rise to a radiance of goodness in the humble heart which lets itself be led by his Spirit.

We have eyes for looking, and our gaze tends to linger on the face of Jesus on the cross. Some artists have managed to com-

municate this face of Christ to an extent that enables us to enter into the mystery simply by looking. Among other things, we grasp that Christ Jesus leaves each person free to choose him, or to reject him. He never forces anyone. Simply, for nearly two thousand years, he stands at the door of every human heart and knocks: Do you love me? Will you remain with me to watch and pray for the people of the earth who are suffering from the abandonment of those they love, or suffering under hate and torture? Even without knowing how to pray we can all hold ourselves in the presence of the One who is risen.

In Haiti we went several times to visit an old black woman who welcomes the poor and destitute in her house. One day this woman prayed, full of compassion: "I suffer because as soon as we have helped one human distress, another person is already here with more suffering". To be truly alive means loving with a heartfelt compassion.

Brother Roger of Taizé

This meditation was delivered on Palm Sunday to the International Youth Jubilee in Rome. Brother Roger was invited to speak with Mother Teresa at the Way of the Cross at the Colosseum.

### HOW CAN ONE BUILD EVEN WITH THE HARDEST EVENTS IN LIFE?

The "Letter from Haiti" asks: "How can we become ferment of trust and peace when so many events in and around us seem to stand in the way? How can we even build with such events?" (see "Letter from Taizé", Feb. 1984).

To build with the hardest events in life is not just an act of personal daring nor does it mean taking up a heroic stance. It is to see God's presence in those places where it may at times seem impossible, to discover the love that comes from him and the gift which he offers. It means committing ourselves with the little we have.

The following notes are intended to help in reflecting on this theme. They have been organized into four chap-

ters, making it possible for a group to meet four times. There are several questions that accompany the notes and may help in leading reflection either alone or in a group.

The article which comes afterward was written by a young person and takes up the same question in view of personal commitment in daily life.

**The European Meeting  
will be held in Germany, in  
COLOGNE**

from 28th December 1984 to 1st January 1985

We shall start preparing now, week by week,  
in the international meetings at Taizé.



## God never sends adversity

To be a ferment of peace and trust, we must be opened to a new vision of God and of the world. When Jesus addressed the crowds for the first time, (Mt 5) he made it clear why his message is good news. He calls those listening to him "happy". Happy the poor of heart. Their joy comes from God. It comes even at times when we expect a trial or a punishment. Happy the poor, you who weep (Lk 6. 20-21), you who to human eyes seem to lack everything. If everyone calls you wretched, if you begin to despise yourself in your misery, know that it is joy that God gives. God never sends adversity.

There is a wonderful expression in the Old Testament. One day when the law of God was read out and explained, everyone began to cry. So the one who was teaching said : "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Ne 8. 10). Without God-given joy, without placing our trust in him, we could do nothing, even if his will were to appear before our eyes in writing. What matters is communion with him to the point that he works in us. But how could we give ourselves to someone from whom we fear rejection for our poverty, punishment for our faults ?

For the Gospel, following Jesus means becoming a servant who goes as far as giving his life. To be perturbed by such a call is nothing surprising. The courage to say yes isn't to be found in an all-powerful control of our fear. The yes grows out of the announcement of joy : "Rejoice, full of grace", says the angel to Mary (Lk 1. 28). Then she is able to say yes.

From where can we draw the necessary trust which releases the energy to be bearers of healing and peace ?  
Where can we find that joy which leads to the courage to say yes to God in a commitment ?

## Drawing life from God's goodness

Paul sometimes began his teaching by urging his listeners to recall the goodness of God. He talked about his good deeds bestowed in our everyday lives : "The living God fills your hearts with food and with gladness" (Acts 14. 17). There Paul hardly speaks about the cross, or of giving one's life, of trials. Could he have forgotten that he wanted to know no other than the crucified Christ ? (1 Cor 2. 2) Certainly not. But he knows that if we don't let confidence in the goodness of God penetrate to our depths, we warp the meaning of Jesus' words to take up our cross to follow him. If God is anything other than love and goodness, all suffering is absurd.

To those who follow him, Jesus says, "Look at the birds of the sky, they neither sow nor reap nor do they

gather, and your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth more than they ? Which of you by worrying can add a minute to his life ? Why worry about clothes ? Look at how the lilies of the field grow. They neither work nor weave. Truly I tell you Solomon in all his glory was never clothed like one of them" (Mt 6. 26-29). To prepare his disciples to go with him to the end, Jesus calls them to faith and trust. He didn't want them to be torn in different directions by their fears and worries. Believing means being rendered firm in God, to live only from his gift. It means leaving behind any illusions of fear which cloud the radiance of God's goodness.

It is as if Jesus were saying to his disciples : at times you will doubt God's love for you. You will wonder, "Is it really joy that comes from him ?" Look carefully. Don't be afraid to let the beauty of creation draw your eye. Even if you are saddened, don't say that praise does not exist. Praise is there in the visible beauty which responds to the invisible beauty of God. For whoever has the courage to seek the gift which God gives each day, sadness never succeeds in fully eclipsing the joy God sends.

Where do I see the joy which comes to me from God ?

How to recognise his goodness wherever it is visible ? (In the creation, in others, in the communion of the Church, in everyday life...)

## Believing without having seen

Some people are in such serious situations that they hardly dare to speak of God's goodness with them. Others don't console another by saying, "joy comes to you from God, you only need look and see". In the Bible, we find believers who, in spite of their faith, were unable to see the goodness of God. For a long time, Job believed without seeing. In his misery, his wife said to him : "Curse God and die" (Job 2. 9). "Curse God" means "tell God he is wicked". And his friends add, "God has turned against you because of your crimes". If Job, innocent of the deeds which were charged against him, had bowed to the arguments of his friends, he would have cursed God from the bottom of his heart and denied his goodness.

Job tells God all that he is living through, his anguish and his sighing. But he keeps hope by leaning on the faith of his people, "I know that my Redeemer is alive" (19. 25). If everyone were to say it, and if I myself ended up saying that God sends me misfortune, that wouldn't be enough to make me abandon the God of all time, whose love is forever. It is he that I seek.

*From this issue, our mailing system is changing. Inform us of any error in your address by returning the envelope to us.*



If Job hadn't been convinced of the goodness of God, wouldn't have persevered in his suffering; he would've died internally. And then one day God wanted him to see what he believed. And Job says, "I knew you by word of mouth but now my eyes have seen you" (42. 5). Suddenly, in the shining brilliance of creation, he understood — not only is God good, but everything comes from him. "Where were you", God asks him, "when I formed the earth amid the joyful concert of the morning stars, while the sons of God rejoiced with one voice?" (38. 7). Job was always with God. Job saw that and the shadow of his thoughts which veiled God from him disappeared. His hope was fulfilled. "He whom I shall see will be for ever. My eyes will gaze upon him, and he shall not be a source of anger" (19. 27).

Of course, it wasn't at once that Paul recognised the supreme expression of the goodness of God in the darkness of Good Friday. "First we knew Christ in a human way, now we know him in another way" (2 Cor 5. 16). At first sight, the suffering of Christ is a failure. It could even be worse. "We considered him stricken by God and humiliated" (Is 53. 4). It would seem as if the cross of Jesus were a curse, for the one passing through darkness is the one who trusted totally in God. They mocked him saying, "He trusted in God, let God save him now!" (Mt 27. 43) Jesus on the cross is one of the poor who, while lacking everything, offers his trust. He is one of those who cry, who hunger and thirst. He is judged by appearance, just as they are. Such destitution would seem to exclude any trace of God's gift.

How can we foster trust during the long times when we don't succeed in seeing God's goodness?  
What helps me to be turned towards God and not towards myself, no matter what the situation? (Letter from Haiti : "Never enclosed in a solitary existence. Rather, as you live in solidarity with all that God entrusts to you, you will see the desire for self-withdrawal disappear").

## The mystery of Easter

"If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom 8. 31). For Paul, this became clear through the Paschal mystery. God never refuses his gift. "He didn't refuse his only Son, but gave him for us all. How then now, with him, will he not give us all things" (8. 32). The abundant goodness of God is shown in the distress of the cross, so that there be never again any human situation which doesn't bear the sign of his love, never a single person excluded from the joy of his resurrection.

Paul is all of a sudden blinded by the light of the resurrection. From that point onward it is no longer by human means that he knows Christ. Enveloped by light, he sees with a new regard : the love of God came down to us in Jesus, and even came there where we thought it was impossible. At the same time, the Holy Spirit enables us to discover what is in us and in others : "We no longer know anyone from a worldly point of view... if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Cor 5. 16-17). The light of the Holy Spirit makes us see who we are by virtue of God's goodness. How we are judged by others, or by ourselves, is of little importance. The joy of God is for everyone, and even for those who, in the world's eyes, do not matter.

Trusting in the goodness of God : How does that change the way I look at myself and at others?  
While in prison, Paul wrote : "Rejoice always in the Lord" (Ph 4. 4). How can we come to see that it is possible to build even with the hardest events of life?

Why not offer your friends a subscription to the Letter from Taizé?

The Letter from Taizé is published bimonthly in ten languages. A yearly subscription to the English edition costs £ 2.50 (UK); \$ 5.00 (USA); 4 crowns (Sweden); \$ 5.50 (Australia) and \$ 7.50 (NZ). — A supporting subscription helps subsidize a solidarity fund. This allows the Letter from Taizé to be sent to those who cannot afford the price of subscription. A supporting subscription costs £ 12 (UK); \$ 25 (USA); 150 crowns (Sweden); \$ 25 (Australia); \$ 25 (NZ).

Correspondence : Letter from Taizé, 71250 Taizé-Community (France). — Tel (85) 50.14.14.  
Subscription to the following addresses :  
AUSTRALIA : Letter f. Taizé, c/o Lee Anderson, Argonhem Glenlusk, TAS 7012.  
CANADA : Letter f. Taizé, c/o A. Delwaide, 55 HENEY, Ont. K1N-5V5.  
NEW ZEALAND : Letter f. Taizé, c/o Jenny Isholm, 13 Arden Way, Wilton, Wellington.  
SCOTLAND : Letter f. Taizé, c/o 23 Christie Street, Inverline, Fife, Scotland.  
USA : Letter f. Taizé, 2150 Almaden Rd. 114, San José, Ca. 95125.  
by bank draft in French francs to : Letter from Taizé, 71250 Taizé-Community, France, or payable through La Société Générale. Cheques in French currency accepted. Please do not send personal cheques in non-French currencies.

Return to : Letter from Taizé, 71250 TAIZÉ-COMMUNITY, France

## SUBSCRIPTION FORM

SURNAME (Write in Block Capitals, one letter per space — leave a space between words. Thank you).  
FIRST NAME  
NUMBER ROAD, STREET, etc.  
ZIP or POST CODE  
VILLAGE, TOWN, CITY  
COUNTY or STATE  
COUNTRY

subscribes ☐ re-subscribes ☐ for one year.  
Wishes to benefit from the solidarity fund ☐  
I am sending the sum of . . . . . to :

It will help if you enclose the most recent envelope.



## PASSING FROM DISCOURAGEMENT TO LIFE COMMITMENT

In today's world, everything seems uncertain. For most young people, the question is not which job to choose but where to find work. Some have been unemployed for several years without any end in sight, while others live with the impoverishing instability of temporary jobs. Young people have had to give much more of their attention to daily needs. This concern weighs heavily on many of us, and it often leads to discouragement or to bitterness ; the indifferent or scornful response of others only worsens matters.

Along with these tensions, there is also an anxiety in the face of the world around us. Between various countries, relationships are difficult and aggressive. Opposition between East and West becomes more pronounced. The idea of nuclear war is ever-present, particularly in central Europe. At the same time, there is an ever-widening gap

From now on, we must move forward just as we are today, for we shall always be somewhat at a loss. As we live in solidarity with others and for others, the temptation to withdraw or give up will disappear. In order to go forward without letting ourselves be discouraged, and to be founded and rooted in an active love, it is our task to be anchored in the here and now. Many ways are open to our creative gifts.

between the North and the South. Beset with our own difficulties, we remain powerless before the problems of under-development, hunger and misery. The origins seem too complex and numerous.

At present we witness a growing feeling of uselessness and frustration. Overwhelmed by our own difficulties, any contributions we can make seem so minor that we are tempted to give up. Submerged by their economic and social problems, the wealthy countries turn in upon themselves. Aid for poor countries is reduced again and again ; the only restraint is the risk that southern countries not pay their financial debts. It is our temptation as well, and we ask ourselves : How can we become a ferment of trust and peace when so many events both in our lives and around us seem opposed ? Can we draw from our difficulties what is needed for building ?

### The means for sharing are there

In our lives, as they are now, there are means for sharing both with those who live around us and also with the world's poor. There's no difference or contradiction between alleviating the difficulties that exist in our neighborhood and helping to alleviate misery in another part of the world. To do one is already to act upon the other. We cannot do everything. Christ alone carries all misery. But in drawing from him the energy needed to act, we place ourselves at the heart of all suffering.

From now on, we must move forward just as we are today, for we shall always be somewhat at a loss. In the same way that Christ loves each one of us in his or her fragility, with a personal love, each one of us is also irreplaceable in the building of the Kingdom of God. And yet we cannot build alone. As we live in solidarity with others and for others, the temptation to withdraw or give up will disappear. In order to go forward without letting ourselves be discouraged, and to be founded and rooted in an active love, it is our task to be anchored in the here and now. Many ways are open to our creative gifts.

### Students, workers and jobless

If we have the chance to study, the choices we make must take into account our own likes and need to find work but also the desire to be of use to everyone. As students, we can share our knowledge in numerous ways around us where we live, in our neighborhood, our parish or in our Church movements. We could teach or share what we've studied with those who are interested or who haven't enough money to enroll for studies. We could also take advantage of the freedom that a life of studies offers in sharing what we've learned with people in other countries who don't have the possibility to acquire such knowledge. This would be a way to live closer to the poor nearby or faraway. In receiving from them, our heart would be widened and we would find the freedom to go forward in a life of sharing.

As workers, we can offer our skills to others. If we have little time, we could help those who live in our own neighborhood. For those who work with their hands, there are a thousand ways to help others who have neither the financial or physical means to work. For example, there are people who need a decent home and yet cannot find one reason or another furnish one. In our professions, couldn't we orient ourselves more and more toward providing basic needs : food for the hungry, health, housing and education ? If we don't have the chance to orient our work in such a way, we could help those who can, for example by offering our skills and taking on, with the time we have, a simple but essential task.

Whether we study or work, we ought to reflect on the possibility of offering, at least once, a longer period of time to carry out a more substantial effort.

For those who are out of work or who have few qualifications, the first concern is to find work. Nonetheless, to live in solidarity with those who have less than we do is so very important. It is important also inasmuch as our own situation tends to isolate us from others. There are different possibilities there as well. We could commit ourselves to creating, with others, an association devoted to providing services otherwise absent or poorly-provided. Other forms of service might commit us less intensively, for example in giving our free time to help those who suffer from loneliness. We too would receive support and accompaniment.



# Bible Readings : Meditating on the Word

The Bible text proposed for each day is the one used in the midday prayer at Taizé. It is short enough to be learned by heart or read several times during the day. The references give the daily readings used in the morning and evening prayers at Taizé (the reference in italics is the one from which the text for midday is taken).

MAY 1984

**Mon 1** Peter wrote : Let your love for one another be real and from a pure heart.  
(*Peter 1.22-25 ; John 4.11-19*)

**Tue 2** Thus says the Lord : I will give my people a single heart and I will put a new spirit within them.  
(*Ezekiel 11.19-20 ; John 4.20-24*)

**Thu 3** Peter wrote : You are a people who belongs to God, so that you may sing the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.  
(*Peter 2.9-12 ; John 4.29-30*)

**Fri 4** Jesus said : My food is to do the will of the one who sent me.  
(*Ezekiel 18.27-32 ; John 4.31-38*)

**Sat 5** I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, says the Lord, but rather that they turn from their ways and live.  
(*Ezk 33.10-11 ; John 4.39-45*)

**SUN 6** The disciples who had been on the road to Emmaus with the Risen Christ said to one another : Weren't our hearts burning within us while he talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us ?  
(*Acts 2.22-28 ; Luke 24.13-35*)

**Mon 7** Peter wrote : Always be ready to answer anyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.  
(*Peter 3.13-17 ; Luke 24.1-12*)

**Tue 8** Peter wrote : Being baptized means committing oneself to God from a good conscience and participating in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.  
(*Peter 3.18-22 ; Luke 24.36-43*)

**Wed 9** Peter wrote : The Gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that though judged in their earthly life, they might come to God's life in the Spirit.  
(*1 Peter 4.1-2, 6 ; Luke 24.44-53*)

**Thu 10** Thus says the Lord : I shall put my Spirit in you and make you act according to my commands. (*Ezk 36.25-28 ; John 3.22-29*)

**Fri 11** John the Baptist said : As Christ becomes greater, I must become less.  
(*Ezk 37.1-6 ; John 3.30-36a*)

**Sat 12** Thus says the Lord : Come, Spirit, come from the four winds ; breathe on these dead so that they may live.  
(*Ezk 37.9-10 ; John 4.46-53*)

**SUN 13** Jesus said : I have come to give you life and to give it to the full.  
(*Acts 2.36-41 ; John 10.1-10*)

**Mon 14** Clothe yourselves with humility towards one another.  
(*1 Peter 5.1-5 ; John 5.1-9a*)

**Tue 15** The Lord says : I shall make a covenant of peace with my people ; it shall be an everlasting covenant.  
(*Ezk 37.23b-28 ; John 5.9b-18*)

**Wed 16** Jesus said : The Son can do nothing by himself. He can do only what he sees the Father doing ; and whatever the Father does the Son does too.  
(*Ezk 39.27-29 ; John 5.19-23*)

**Thu 17** Jesus said : Whoever listens to my words and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life.  
(*2 Peter 1.5-11 ; John 5.24-29a*)

**Fri 18** You are to share out the land which is coming to you. It will be for you and for the strangers settled among you.  
(*Ezk 47.13-14, 22-23 ; John 5.30-36*)

**Sat 19** God knows what lies in the darkness and light dwells with him.  
(*Daniel 2.20-22 ; John 5.39-44*)

**SUN 20** As you come to Christ the living stone, you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual temple.  
(*1 Peter 2.4-9 ; John 14.1-12*)

**Mon 21** You will do well to pay attention to the prophetic word, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.  
(*2 P 1.17-21 ; John 12.44-50*)

**Tue 22** Jesus said to his disciples : I give you a new commandment : love one another ; just as I have loved you, you also must love one another.  
(*Daniel 3.46-50 ; John 13.31-36*)

**Wed 23** Jesus said : There are many rooms in my Father's house.  
(*2 P 3.13-18 ; John 14.1-3*)

**Thu 24** Thomas said to Jesus : Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way ? Jesus said : I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.  
(*Colossians 1.1-6 ; John 14.4-7*)

**Fri 25** God has torn us away from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.  
(*Col 1.9-14 ; John 14.8-10*)

**Sat 26** Daniel prayed : We do not rely on our own good works, but on your great mercy.  
(*Dn 9.17-19 ; John 14.11-14*)

**SUN 27** Before his death, Jesus said : I will not leave you as orphans ; I will come to you.  
(*Acts 8.5-8, 14-17 ; John 14.15-21*)

**Mon 28** God was pleased to reconcile the whole of creation to himself through Christ, by making peace through the gift of his life on the cross.  
(*Col 1.17-20 ; John 14.22-26*)

**Tue 29** Do not be sad. For your strength is in the Lord's joy.  
(*Nehemiah 8.3, 9-10 ; John 14.22-26*)

**Wed 30** Paul wrote to the Colossians : Now I rejoice to suffer for you, and in my own body to do what I can to make up all that has still to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his body, the Church.  
(*Col 1.24-29 ; John 15.1-5*)

**Thu 31 ASCENSION DAY**  
Jesus said : I am with you always, to the very end of time.  
(*Ephesians 1.17-23 ; Matthew 28.16-20*)



*Fri 1* Jesus said : As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Remain in my love. (Colossians 2.1-5 ; John 15.7-12)

*Sat 2* God has given us life with Christ, he has forgiven us all our sins. (Col 2.12-14 ; John 15.13-17)

*SUN 3* As he prayed Jesus said : Eternal life is this : to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. (1 Peter 4.13-16 ; John 17.1-11)

*Mon 4* In Christ's body lives the fullness of God, and in him you have a share in his fullness. (Col 2.6-10 ; John 15.18-25)

*Tue 5* Jesus said : When the Comforter comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will bear witness to me. (Proverbs 3.27-31 ; John 15.26-16.4)

*Wed 6* Jesus said : When the Spirit of truth comes he will lead you into all truth, since he will not speak on his own but will say only what he hears. (Col 3.8-11 ; John 16.5-7, 12-15)

*Thu 7* Paul wrote : You are God's chosen people, his saints, his beloved ; clothe yourselves with compassion, goodness and humility. (Col 3.12-17 ; John 16.16-23a)

*Fri 8* Paul wrote : Be persevering in prayer ; may it keep you watchful and thankful. (Col 4.2-6 ; John 16.23b-27)

*Sat 9* I have spoken to you so that you may find peace in me. In the world you will have trouble but take heart for I have overcome the world. (Col 3.1-4 ; John 16.28-33)

*SUN 10* PENTECOST  
We have all been baptised in one Spirit to form one body. (1 Cor 12.3-13 ; John 20.19-23)

*Mon 11* On Pentecost day Peter said : What the prophet announced has been fulfilled : In the last days, says the Lord, I will pour out my spirit on all people. (Acts 2.14-21 ; John 17.1-3)

*Tue 12* When the Spirit is poured out on us from on high, the desert will become a fertile

field. Justice will live there and the fruit it bears will be peace. (Isaiah 32.15-17 ; John 17.4-8)

*Wed 13* Jesus prayed : Those you have given me are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, so that they may be one as we are one. (Isaiah 44.1-5 ; John 17.9-12a)

*Thu 14* Paul wrote : In each one of us the Spirit makes its work manifest for the common good. (1 Cor 12.7-11 ; John 17.13-19)

*Fri 15* Jesus prayed : May those who believe in me be so completely one that the world will realise that you sent me and have loved them as you loved me. (Jeremiah 31.31-34 ; John 17.20-23)

*Sat 16* Love rejoices in the truth ; it always excuses, always trusts, always hopes and always perseveres. (1 Cor 13.4-7 ; John 17.24-26)

*SUN 17* God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life. (2 Cor 13.11-13 ; John 3.16-18)

*Mon 18* Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew into the hills by himself. (Proverbs 16.19-20 ; John 6.1-15)

*Tue 19* Do not say "I will repay evil!" Hope in the Lord and he will save you. (Proverbs 17.9 ; 20.22 ; John 6.16-21)

*Wed 20* Paul wrote : Now we see but a poor reflection, then we shall see face to face. The knowledge that I have now is imperfect, but then I shall know as fully as I am known. (1 Cor 13.8-13 ; John 6.22-27)

Risen Jesus, when doubt and indifference seem to stifle everything, you are there to rekindle the fire glowing beneath our ashes. This fire sets alight our darkness. Through you, even the stones of our heart can become blazing coals.

(prayer by Brother Roger)

*Thu 21* Jesus said : The bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. (Ecclesiastes 3.1, 9-13 ; John 6.28-34)

*Fri 22* Jesus said : I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but to do the will of the one who sent me. (1 Cor 14.18-20, 26 ; John 6.35-40)

*Sat 23* Paul wrote : All people will be brought to life in Christ. (1 Cor 15.22-28 ; John 6.41-50)

*SUN 24* Jesus said : I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever. (1 Cor 10.16-17 ; John 6.51-58)

*Mon 25* Paul wrote : It is by the grace of God that I am what I am. (1 Cor 15.1-11 ; John 6.60-65)

*Tue 26* Jesus said to the Twelve : Do you want to leave too ? Simon Peter answered : Lord, to whom shall we go ? You have the words of eternal life. (Jeremiah 23.1-4 ; John 6.66-69)

*Wed 27* Those who seek the Lord will praise him. (Psalm 22.23-32 ; John 7.1-9)

*Thu 28* Paul wrote : Know that in the Lord you cannot labour in vain. (1 Cor 15.54-58 ; John 7.10-18)

*Fri 29* SAINTS PETER and PAUL, APOSTLES  
Jesus said to Peter : Do you love me ? Peter said to him : Lord, you know everything ; you know that I love you. (Galatians 1.11-20 ; John 21.15-19)

*Sat 30* I will restore you to health and heal your wounds, says the Lord. (Jeremiah 30.12-13, 17-19 ; John 7.24-30)



Several Taizé brothers, both African and European, have been living now for six years in a Nairobi slum called Mathare Valley. Like the other 100,000 people in Mathare, they live in a rented wooden shack. Their chapel, a corner of the barrack arranged with the eucharistic presence, is a place of contemplative prayer located at the heart of a particularly difficult situation.

Only recently, about ten small Christian communities have risen from within the local Catholic parish. Each is composed of twenty to thirty adults and, together with the children and young people, forms a considerable group. They meet either outside or in a barrack which they rent together, and assume various responsibilities

At present, there are pilgrimages of reconciliation taking place, both on a large and small scale, across different countries and continents. One person goes to another to be reconciled... young people are going two by two to bring the "call to the Churches" to others... different pilgrimages, as in the following account from Africa, are taking on visible form... in different circumstances, there is the same movement forward from death toward the resurrection.

Such as catechism for children, preparation for baptism, confirmation and marriage. They visit the sick, offer help to one another and also prepare prayer celebrations. The parish area also covers another neighborhood called Eastleigh, which is not as poor as Mathare. The homes there are made in stone, and yet often the families have only one room to live in. A large road, Juja road, separates the two neighborhoods. Mathare people are often too ashamed to go into Eastleigh, and similarly people from Eastleigh are afraid to visit Mathare. Even though the parish incorporates the two neighborhoods, Juja road marks a sharp dividing line.

### From one side of the road to the other

With the Holy Year, a desire grew to strengthen communion between the different small communities, and a pilgrimage of reconciliation was prepared. The cross and icon of the resurrection from the Brothers' chapel were transported from one community to another, and crossed the big road several times. From both sides of the road, Christians could go and visit one another.

The first prayer took place in the tiny barrack of a small Christian community who meet not far from the Brothers. There were far more people than the barrack could hold. It was like Easter Sunday at a Russian church : those who were inside could hear those outside as they responded to their singing. They sang : "Come all of you who are overburdened and you will find rest". Then, there was a song in Kiswahili sung for a long time : "Tukipenana kama ndugu" (Ubi caritas). For someone living in Mathare Valley, a gesture such as handing over one's burdens at the cross is easily understood. A long procession formed : children, mothers with babies on their backs, elderly people, all passed in front of the cross. The cross took a little each time someone put his or her forehead on it : the surrounding dirt floor was uneven and gave little support. It was already nighttime when the Gospel

of the resurrection was read. Someone asked : "Who would like to continue to watch and pray with Christ ?" "The sick", came one reply. The people then went on, carrying the two icons along a long and poorly-lit road to the house of a sick elderly woman. With political elections coming soon, some policemen came to see what was going on. Upon seeing the cross and the people there, all marked by suffering, they understood that it wasn't a political meeting, and after some laughter, the singing began again. The cross remained in the house all night and, over the next days, went from one sick person to another.

Meanwhile, Christians in Eastleigh were also contacted. People from Mathare brought the two icons to the other side of the road, where the icons remained for several days before being returned to Mathare. For one month,

## A PILGRIMAGE OF RECONCILIATION IN AN AFRICAN SLUM

the cross thus passed from one community to another, each time crossing the road, and at times also crossing tribal boundaries.

### Children at prayer

An evening came when some children asked that the cross be welcomed in their own home. The children had lost their father in the war in Uganda, and their mother had been obliged to leave them to find work, so they were living alone. They arranged everything in their barrack and invited another fifty or so children to come. If there hadn't been any adults there to remind them of the time, they would have continued praying the entire night.

At the very end of the pilgrimage, a seemingly insurmountable barrier was crossed. Not far from Mathare, there are Christians of Asian origin who have been living in Kenya since they first came, over one hundred years ago, to build the railroads. Though they belong to the same parish as Africans, they often have very few contacts with them. Several elderly women from Mathare, who had never been inside an Asian home, brought the cross to an Asian community that often meets to pray. Without any language in common, the people were astonished to see they were able to pray together. The cross then went on from one Asian community to the next, until the evening when several Asian women finally accompanied the cross back to Mathare ; they had never been to Mathare before, the fear and prejudice was so strong. A small seed of trust had been sown.

### A new record :

RESURREXIT TZ 3008 (cassette TZ 408)

All the chants from the European meeting in Paris.



**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC** — For over ten years, there has been a bond of communion between the "Easter of the young" in the Dominican Republic and the Easter meeting in Taizé by virtue of both prayer and reflection. This year for the "Easter of the young" in Santo Domingo there will be a large meeting. On Good Friday, a pilgrimage of the cross will pass through the city's parishes. On Holy Saturday, there will be a national meeting in the olympic stadium, with 40,000 young people present singing "Christus resurrexit" together. And on Easter Sunday, the "Letter from Haiti" will be read in all the parishes. In a text written to help prepare the meeting, young people of the Dominican Republic said : *"At Christmas in 1983, we shared the joy of the presence of "God-with-us", Emmanuel who, taking on all that is human, entered our history. The same Jesus invites us to follow him. We will follow him, assured that he asks young people to participate in his Easter passage from death to life and to take up their own cross. Losing one's life, in the light of faith, means gaining everything and finding life. Our reflection cannot stop at words. In following Jesus we continue his work, transforming and saving the world. Following Jesus means acting with him here and now, writing the history of salvation"*.

**SPAIN** — Madrid, 9 PM, December 26th, 1983 : Ten young people pass the security check at the entrance to Carabanchel prison. Coming from a Madrid parish, the young people were leaving the next day for the European meeting in Paris and, by their visit, wanted to link prisoners to their pilgrimage. *"We wanted simply to pray together. We went there as members of a society which condemns a person on the basis of one deed. We wanted to ask forgiveness of the prisoners for not understanding that a person is more than his actions."*

*We had brought with us the icon of the Mother of Christ and a guitar. They had prepared hymns and readings weeks before. We were able to pray together — guards, prisoners, sick prisoners and sisters who help care for them, three priests and our little group. During the prayer one of the prisoners said to us : "Thank you for giving up your freedom to come and share our captivity. Tell what you saw here tonight. Tell that you shared the anguish of men rejected by society. Say that we are sinners but that we are firstly the sin of society"*.

*In the middle of the singing and intercessions, we made a gesture, stretching out our hands to the prisoners so that they would trace the sign of forgiveness in them, the sign of the cross. We gave them an olive branch picked on the outskirts of Madrid that morning. At that point, different prisoners, a drug addict whose legs had been damaged by*

*police shots, another who had killed his son, and others, embraced us. We felt as if face-to-face with the mystery and splendour of the human being who can be reborn at every moment. Even in the desert of their cells some of these men had received from God the gift of liberty. We saw some free prisoners, in the same way that it is possible to see free people imprisoned within inner walls"*.

**FRANCE** — In the months following the European meeting in Paris, some people there wondered, "After such a strong time of prayer and openness, where we have witnessed a deepening in church life and discovered the human realities of "places of hope", with what activities can we continue? What is my vocation in the Church?" Young people in Paris are now reflecting in meetings on this theme.

To celebrate Lent, a pilgrimage was prepared from parish to parish for the month of March. The 31 days were divided among the 7 parts of the Paris region. Each night the icon of the cross was there, as a sign that Christ gathers us together by giving his life. In most of the places chosen there was already a regular prayer which thus took on a special tone that evening. During the day the cross was taken to different places of the area : to a home for elderly people, a hospital, a religious community, the school, to families — all as a reminder that Christ visits every person, without any exceptions.

Also in Paris, the prayer which began before the Europeans meeting, during the time of preparation, continues each day in the church of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, at 1 PM.

**LEBANON** — "Our land is thirsting more and more for peace, like so many other parts of the world, faced with an ever-deteriorating situation, accompanied by all the misery and injury you can imagine, the local church made an appeal to all believers, to religious and lay-people, to come together and pray day and night. We have been able to take part despite the continual bombing and insecurity in our region. The gathering takes place in our parish, the same place where in 1840 Christian, Muslim and Druze factions vowed to fight no more".

**INDIA** — "Two of us went for a week to Varanasi, the Hindu holy city. Christians there are a small minority, the third generation since the arrival of missionaries. We visited Catholic and Protestant communities, and through them we were able to meet Hindu friends and Buddhist monks. What was most

impressive for us was to be able to partake in the pilgrimage Christians make first Friday of every month as part of Holy Year. Nearly all the Christian communities take part. The walk began at four in the morning. We walked with lit candles, singing and praying. Two young people carried icons we had brought of the cross and resurrection. The town was still asleep. The first prayer was then held in the cathedral.

**CHINA** — "Together with a young person from Hong Kong, we went to spend several days in China. We were able to have conversations in chance meetings on buses, in restaurants, museums, and certain churches which are open. Twice, on entering a church, we were taken to a room for meetings between visitors and priests. We introduced ourselves simply as tourists. In such circumstances, where everything is overheard, open dialogue is impossible. We asked to go to pray in the church and that was the most important thing. After saying the "Our Father" and singing other hymns in Latin, the only language used by Catholics in the church, we began singing "Ubi caritas". Others joined in at once. Then we stayed a long time in silence. On Sunday there were long lines before the confessionals. On Monday alone with us, a priest asked for news of the Holy Year.

There are also some Protestant churches open. Visiting there during the week, we found organists and we asked them to play something. Then we played and sang "Ubi caritas". Before leaving we said the Lord's prayer. We asked them no questions, they asked us none.

Our pilgrimage also led us past many churches, still recognizable but now used for workshops, hospitals, stores, and housing.

**Summer Pilgrimages in North America** with the brothers of Taizé :

- August 5 - 12 : Val d'Espoir, Gaspé Peninsula, Quebec. Information : Sr. Jean Parent. C.P. 645. Cap-Chat GOZIEO. (418) 786-5375.
- August 19 - 26 : Lakeland College, Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Information : Rev. M. Carroll. Diocese of Green Bay. 1825 Riverside Drive. Green Bay, Wi., (414) 437-5757.